

SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

March 17, 2021

9:01 a.m.

9:01:13 AM

CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chair Stedman called the Senate Finance Committee meeting to order at 9:01 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Click Bishop, Co-Chair  
Senator Bert Stedman, Co-Chair  
Senator Lyman Hoffman  
Senator Donny Olson  
Senator Natasha von Imhof  
Senator Bill Wielechowski (via teleconference)  
Senator David Wilson (via teleconference)

MEMBERS ABSENT

None

PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE

Terri Walker, Superintendent, Northwest Arctic Borough School District, Kotzebue; Chuck Degnan, Self, Unalakleet; Michael Jaffery, Self, Utqiagvik; Erin Hollingsworth, Self, Utqiagvik; Brenda Moore, Alaska Mental Health Board, Anchorage; Alyssa Sappenfield, Energy Analyst, Alaska Public Interest Group, Anchorage; Herman Morgan, Self, Aniak.

SUMMARY

SB 49        APPROP: OPERATING BUDGET/LOANS/FUNDS

SB 49 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

SB 50        APPROP: CAP; REAPPROP; SUPP; AMEND

SB 50 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

SB 51        APPROP: MENTAL HEALTH BUDGET

SB 51 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

#sb49

#sb50

#sb51

SENATE BILL NO. 49

"An Act making appropriations for the operating and loan program expenses of state government and for certain programs; capitalizing funds; amending appropriations; making reappropriations; making supplemental appropriations; making appropriations under art. IX, sec. 17(c), Constitution of the State of Alaska, from the constitutional budget reserve fund; and providing for an effective date."

SENATE BILL NO. 50

"An Act making appropriations, including capital appropriations, reappropriations, and other appropriations; making supplemental appropriations; making appropriations to capitalize funds; and providing for an effective date."

SENATE BILL NO. 51

"An Act making appropriations for the operating and capital expenses of the state's integrated comprehensive mental health program; making supplemental appropriations; and providing for an effective date."

[9:03:55 AM](#)

^PUBLIC TESTIMONY: NOME, BETHEL, KOTZEBUE, UTQIAGVIK, UNALASKA, DILLINGHAM, AND ALL OTHER LOCATIONS

[9:03:55 AM](#)

Co-Chair Stedman handed the gavel to Senator Olson.

[9:04:32 AM](#)

TERRI WALKER, SUPERINTENDENT, NORTHWEST ARCTIC BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT, KOTZEBUE (via teleconference), spoke in support of stable education school funding. She spoke in support of the current Base Student Allocation (BSA). She urged support of funding for early education. She requested a true-up for full funding the dormitory need. She noted an increase in adult students with children who needed housing for to attend the technical school, and requested \$3 million for the project. She spoke in full support of the Power Cost Equalization (PCE). She stated that her school district served an area the size of West Virginia, and 95 percent of the students were Alaska Native. She remarked that vaccination rates were increasing, and many schools were operating with full in person learning.

[9:08:34 AM](#)

CHUCK DEGNAN, SELF, UNALAKLEET (via teleconference), spoke to the issues of the necessary upgrades for the water system in Unalakleet. He stressed that the current system was out of date. He stressed that the water and sewer system was in great need of a full replacement.

[9:10:01 AM](#)

Senator Olson stressed the importance of clean water, especially during the current pandemic.

[9:10:23 AM](#)

AT EASE

[9:32:37 AM](#)

RECONVENED

[9:33:18 AM](#)

MICHAEL JAFFERY, SELF, UTQIAGVIK (via teleconference), remarked that he would be testifying based on the proposed budget, with the understanding that it could change over time. He spoke in support of funding for therapeutic courts. He felt that therapeutic courts met the needs of individuals, reduced jail time, and saved the state money. He spoke against the reductions of the funding for legal services. He spoke against transferring money from the general fund to the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority (AMHTA). He spoke in support of maintaining the state's savings accounts. He testified in support of funding for

public broadcasting because many of the rural communities depended on public radio.

[9:38:16 AM](#)

ERIN HOLLINGSWORTH, SELF, UTQIAGVIK (via teleconference), testified in support of adding the \$635,000 for the Alaska Library Network back into the budget. She shared that she had worked in the library, and that students and teachers needed funding to maintain credential licensure. She stressed that the Alaska Library Network connected over 90 libraries to help link to other resources, which was especially necessary during the pandemic. She spoke in support of Alaska Public Media. She remarked that the rural areas relied on public radio. She felt that investments would work to make Alaska stronger.

[9:41:55 AM](#)

BRENDA MOORE, ALASKA MENTAL HEALTH BOARD, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke against the \$35 million reduction to Medicaid. She understood that it might be backfilled with Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding, but noted that there had been no plan for implementation. She expressed concern about the reduction to the public field services, which could result in delays in access to benefits. She spoke against the reduction to the Civil Legal Services Fund. She stated that the sobering centers had a reduction, and she spoke against that reduction. She stressed that the providers were not prepared to bill for reimbursement, and some of the services were not reimbursable. She spoke in support of funding for the therapeutic courts. She spoke in concern of the appropriation of AMHTA reserves, but believed that work was focused on that issue, and she was paying attention to that issue.

[9:46:00 AM](#)

Senator Olson agreed that there was a concern about the AMHTA appropriation. He stated that there would be an AT EASE until 10am.

[9:46:13 AM](#)

AT EASE

[10:18:06 AM](#)

RECONVENED

[10:18:18 AM](#)

ALYSSA SAPPENFIELD, ENERGY ANALYST, ALASKA PUBLIC INTEREST GROUP, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke against \$375,000 for the Hillcorp storage. She wanted to know the benefit of the agreement with Hillcorp, and wanted to know why Hillcorp could not cover the cost of storage.

[10:22:02 AM](#)

AT EASE

[10:22:26 AM](#)

RECONVENED

Co-Chair Stedman handed the gavel to Senator Olson.

[10:22:45 AM](#)

HERMAN MORGAN, SELF, ANIAK (via teleconference), felt that accepting the governor's money, would result in "end times." He felt that "Babylon had fallen", and used analogies by quoting scripture. He expressed concern about vaccinations and culture. He encouraged the committee to look beyond money.

[10:26:27 AM](#)

AT EASE

[10:39:51 AM](#)

RECONVENED

Co-Chair Stedman discussed the afternoon's agenda.

SB 49 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

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SB 51 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

[10:40:46 AM](#)

RECESSED

#

10:40:46 AM

ADJOURNED

This meeting automatically ADJOURNED when the 1:00 PM  
scheduled meeting automatically convened.